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N FERRIS - AUSSIE CULTURE

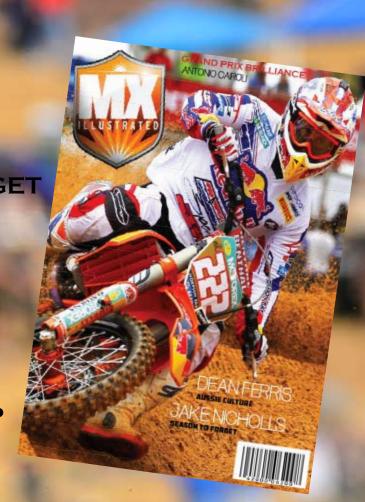
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### **Motocross Illustrated**

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Nijmeegsestraat 59, Gendt
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While the FIM World Motocross Championships continue to go through change, more races, more countries and larger television audience, nothing changes at the top of the MX and MX2 Championships. Red Bull KTM Factory riders Antonio Cairoli and Jeffrey Herlings continue to be the men of the moment.

Sure enough Cairoli scored yet another 1-1 result for his 58th GP victory, one more than Joel Smets and the Italian sits now as the second most successful rider in Grand Prix history. Only Stefan Everts stands ahead of him, and with another 43 GP wins and four World titles it is going to take a might effort from the Italian to catch the Belgian

King. As for Brazil. Overcast skies, a little rain and the long trek to Brazil the Grand Prix paddock was made up for with a beautiful circuit and of course the drama of the MX2 class. Jeffrey Herlings had gone undefeated until Brazil and I am sure nearly everyone involved in the sport was hoping he could continue his domination of









Kawasaki Racing Team's Gautier Paulin did not have a good start in the first race and he was down in the eleventh position in the first corners of the race. However, the French rider gave it all and he crossed the finish line in the fourth place. His teammate Jeremy Van Horebeek also had a solid first race; the Belgian rider was eighth at the start, but he managed to overtake Kevin Strijbos, Ken De Dycker and David Philippaerts and he finished fifth.

### MX2 Race 1

Red Bull KTM Factory Racing's Jeffrey Herlings struggled once again with his start in the first race, but he did an incredible recovery and he made the crowd go crazy lap after lap. The Dutch was 12th at the start and even if most of the riders said that it was very difficult to pass, Herlings managed to win the first race with almost twelve seconds difference with the second. Standing Construct KTM's Glenn Coldenhoff started second behind Alexander Tonkov, who had taken the Get Athena Holeshot, but the Dutch rider overtook the Russian after the first three laps and Coldenhoff took the lead of the race. Colden-

Red Bull KTM Factory Racing's Jordi Tixier could not have a good start in the first race and he was sixth in the first lap. During the first laps the French rider struggled to find a good rhythm, but by the middle of the race Tixier was able to overtake Dylan Ferrandis, Alexander Tonkov and Mel Pocock, so the French rider ended fourth. Monster Energy Yamaha's Mel Pocock obtained his best result of the season by finishing fifth in the first race. The British rider had a really good start and he was fourth in the first laps, but Herlings overtook him and he dropped down to fifth. The British rider managed to pass Tonkov by the middle of the heat but Pocock was overtaken by Tixier in the last minutes of the race and he had to settle down with the fifth position. Jose Butrón did not have a very good start in the first race and he struggled to

hoff was feeling really good, but he could not keep his compatriot Herlings at the back, so Coldenhoff had to settle down with the second position.

Wilvo Nestaan JM Racing KTM's Jake Nicholls had a very consistent first race and he managed to finish third. The British rider started third and in lap four he overtook Tonkov and moved up to second. However, Herlings was coming really fast from behind and Nicholls dropped one position.



find a good rhythm. After racing eighth most of the heat, the Spanish rider started feeling better and he overtook a couple of riders and he crossed the finish line sixth.

Dean Ferris finished seventh, Dylan Ferrandis was eighth and Alexander Tonkov and Alessandro Lupino completed the top ten.

Super Final The Grand Prix of Brazil hosted the last Super Final of 2013 and it was slightly different from the ones in Qatar and Thailand. The MX1 and MX2 riders lined up for the Super Final in their respective championship standings up to the tenth gate pick, i.e. Cairoli, Herlings, Paulin, Tixier and so on. However, Herlings decided not to be next to Cairoli and he chose the first gate from the inside. ICE1Racing's Rui Gonçalves took the holeshot of the Super Final, but after the first few corners Rockstar Energy Suzuki's Kevin Strijbos overtook him and the Belgian led the race until there were three laps to go. Red Bull KTM Factory Racing's Antonio Cairoli had a good start but he almost crashed in the opening lap so he went down in fourth; the Italian tried to overtake the front riders as soon as possible, but when he was second Strijbos had already opened a big gap and Cairoli started getting some arm pump. In the end Strijbos got a little bit tired so Cairoli could close the gap and with three laps to go the Italian took the lead. Rockstar Energy Suzuki's Clement Desalle admitted that he did not feel really comfortable today, but he managed to ride a consistent moto in third. Kawasaki Racing Team's Gautier Paulin was fifth in the first lap of the Super Final, but after four laps he managed to overtake Ken De Dycker and he kept the fourth position until the chequered flag, position that

gave him the overall fourth place of

the Grand Prix of Brazil.



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Three Australian riders have finished second in the FIM World Motocross Championships. Jeff Leisk in 1989 when he claimed the runner-up spot to Dave Thorpe in the World 500cc Championship, Chad Reed when he finished second to Mickael Pichon in the 2001 World 250cc Championship and Andrew McFarlane when he finished second to Antonio Cairoli in the 2005 FIM World MX2 Championship. Three men who came so close, but not close enough to be the first Australian to win a World Motocross Championship.

#### WORDS GEOFF MEYER IMAGES RAY ARCHER

Just like for the South Africans, New Zealand's and American riders who have travelled to Europe to try and conquer the Europeans it isn't an easy job, and while three Aussies mentioned were clearly World class riders, they couldn't give the proud nation of Australia a gold medal. Now another Australian rider
Dean Ferris is making inroads
into the FIM World Motocross
Championship and showing the
same heart and determination
of Leisk, Reed and McFarlane.
We caught up with Ferris and
asked him about his climb
up the rankings as he tries to
move into second place in the

World MX2 Championship. A Championship that currently looks like going to the Flying Dutchman Jeffrey Herlings.

Motocross Illustrated: Dean, you have been on the World scene now for three years, although this year you are really showing great results and speed. What has changed for you since 2011 and 2012?

Ferris: For me, I mean, I guess I opened up my eyes and decided to ride MX2 this year and the goal was to get confidence and ride at the front of the pack, and its gone pretty good until now with some podiums. It takes a while to get trained up to do the longer motos in the GPs and I feel good now racing them.

Motocross Illustrated: Did you ever feel like you didn't belong here? Ferris: I always felt I belonged, maybe the first year I wasn't riding up front and I was thrown in the deep end a bit, but I always knew I had talent and I have good skills and a good style, and that is obviously important in Grand Prix with the technical tracks. I thought that would bring me back to the top. Motocross Illustrated: I have been surprised by the MX2 class in 2013. A lot of young riders have come through and are showing really good speed. What do you think of the MX2 class? Ferris: No doubt about it MX1 is tougher, that is clear, but there are some good riders in MX2 and if you look at for instance Italy, the top five MX2 guys were doing top five lap times if they rode MX1 and Herlings was quicker than the MX1 guys, so there is talent in the class, we are going quick, it just looks bad because Herlings is beating us by so much.

Motocross Illustrated: You mentioned to me that you have done some testing and you have improved the performance of the bike. Can you tell me more about that?

Ferris: I think I have found speed just from the last round, we did some testing and the bike is quicker than it was in Portugal. I had been riding around

problems in the first six rounds. We hadn't tested much because I stayed in Australia in the pre-season and then got injured before Valkenswaard, so it meant we hadn't really tested yet.

Motocross Illustrated: Obviously 2014 is a long way off, but moving to the MX1 class next year isn't going to be easy is it. How can you make the transition better?

Ferris: I am yet to set goals for 2014, as you said it is a long way off, but MX1, that is a tough class. I think you need to change some things, like your body, become stronger. The quicker I get in the MX2 class the more confident I will be going into the MX1 class next year, so that is going to be an important part of the process. It is always going to be a learning experience, even though I had ridden MX1 in 2011 and 2012. If I can get more podiums in the coming months and also getting the bike right is so much more important and for sure Steve (Dixon) and I will be working hard to have the bike set-up well and a lot of my energy will be put into that.

worldwide results of AMA, FIM or even the Aussie Championships the bikes that are winning in the MX1 or 450 classes are often KTM, or Kawasaki, sometimes Honda, but hardly ever Yamaha. The 450 Yamaha hasn't had very good results and the word is it is hard to ride. In fact in recent years it seems like it's a bike you need to really have a style to ride it. What is your opinion, have you ridden one before?

Ferris: I have never ridden the 450, so I can't comment on that, but if the rumours are true, I hope its okay. I heard they are coming out with a new design, and with Cosworth we have options, which is nice. I just have to wait and see. I have signed a contract and I hope it will be okay, but I am confident we can.

Motocross Illustrated: What problems did you have with your bike before Brazil? Ferris: I was battling with pretty much the setup, the motor is great, we tested a lot in Portugal during the weekend and made some massive changes after Portugal, with geometry and stuff and I didn't realize how off the ball park I was. For me to

finish second on the binance of the second on the binance of the second on the binance of the second of the second

Ferris: The feeling was it was end, but it was the rear that ing the front to get away. No crashes (like the one in Pobecause of the problem we ever fall off, but the bike is stable now and we have more corner speed now.

Motocross Illustrated: No has ever won a World Mot pionship; we have had thre finishes with Jeff Leisk, Ch Andrew McFarlane. Beating for the MX2 title isn't going at least unless he has a m How good would it feel to judy Aussies as the next best go Ferris: For sure, that is the















# »BACK TO OLD SCHOOL



9. GP OF ITALY MAGGIORA - 16/06/2013















qualifying at Hangtown, Blake showed he still had his speed and qualified third, but questions still lingered about the #1's fitness. In moto one, he surprised everyone with an uncharacteristic holeshot, but then proceded to go backwards. At one point, Blake was pushed back to fifth, but as he's done in the past, he fought forward late in the race. Blake caught back up to Eli Tomac—who was running 2nd—but after not being able to make the pass, Blake finished moto one in third behind Ken Roczen and Tomac.In moto two, Blake again got a great start and, by the end of lap one, found himself leading again. This time,

though, Blake was only passed by Roczen, and he held strong behind the German for the whole moto. Blake was never able to really make a run at Kenny, but his fitness looked solid and the speed was definitely still there. Blake finished the day with a 3-2 for second overall and left feeling good about his progress in the short time he's been back on the bike. After the race, we talked to Blake about his Hangtown National. You can read that conversation below. Second overall, first race back. How do you feel?Yep, second overall, first race back and, you know, definitely better than most ex



always good to win, so my thought on it is I would have liked to win, but you can't win them all. But you can, you can for sure throw it away at round one, so to come away only 8 points down, it's not badwith not having raced in 5 months. Just gonna build on it, for sure. I got the speed, I know that. And, you know, the team knows that the bike's working good. If we can just fix up a few little things here and there and have a good weekend here or there, we should be in the points lead. You never know what's gonna happen in the points race. It's gonna go all the way down to the last round more than likely. It always does. And I'm racing two of the toughest competitors out there-you know, the two guys that were on the podium this weekend. You know you're not going to catch them on an off day, for sure. You gotta do your best you can every weekend. If you come away on the box, it's good. But I think I wanted to come in here and win, but you can't win them all I guess.

Well, you settled on 12.5% movement when we last talked about your wrist. Was it any better today?

I mean, that's all I can go down, and that's all I can go up. I mean, you compare both wrists, and there's not much there. It's what I got to work with. I'm not using it as an excuse; it's just something I got to adapt to, and hopefully it get's better as the races go on and feels more natural.

#### Is it painful or just stiff?

Yeah, it hurts. I mean, straight like bone to bone when I go up, so when you're on the accelerator and you're going across the breaking bumps, it's pretty brutal, but it's one of those things that if you want to win this Champion-

ship again, you gotta do it.

## Did Roczen surprise you at all today?

Ah no, I mean, I knew those guys were going to be good. Nobody's going to come in here and walk away with it. Maybe he surprised me a little bit. I thought Tomac, you know, I thought it would have been opposite with them, like switched it. But, yeah, it's definitely gonna be a long season, and I think there's going to be good racing. It won't be boring; I can promise you that.

### What did it feel like getting good starts at Hangtown?

Yeah, good starts at Hangtown definitely are cool. I never lead it up the hill before ever here, so it was cool to get a good start, get out there and just run with it. I got swallowed up a little bit by those guys, but the first three laps I was kind of a little nervous and didn't want to do anything too sketchy to make a mistake. Then I got passed and then started working my way up, working my way forward again.

Do you feel more comfortable kind of taking it easy in the beginning and then building up steam as the race goes on?

Yeah, I don't really know what it is. I have no explanation on it. We'll see. Who knows what starts I'll get next week, and who knows what will happen. I could come out swinging, you know?

Alright, well, good luck next week, Blake.

Thanks, I appreciate it.









Carlotte Secretary and Secretary of the last

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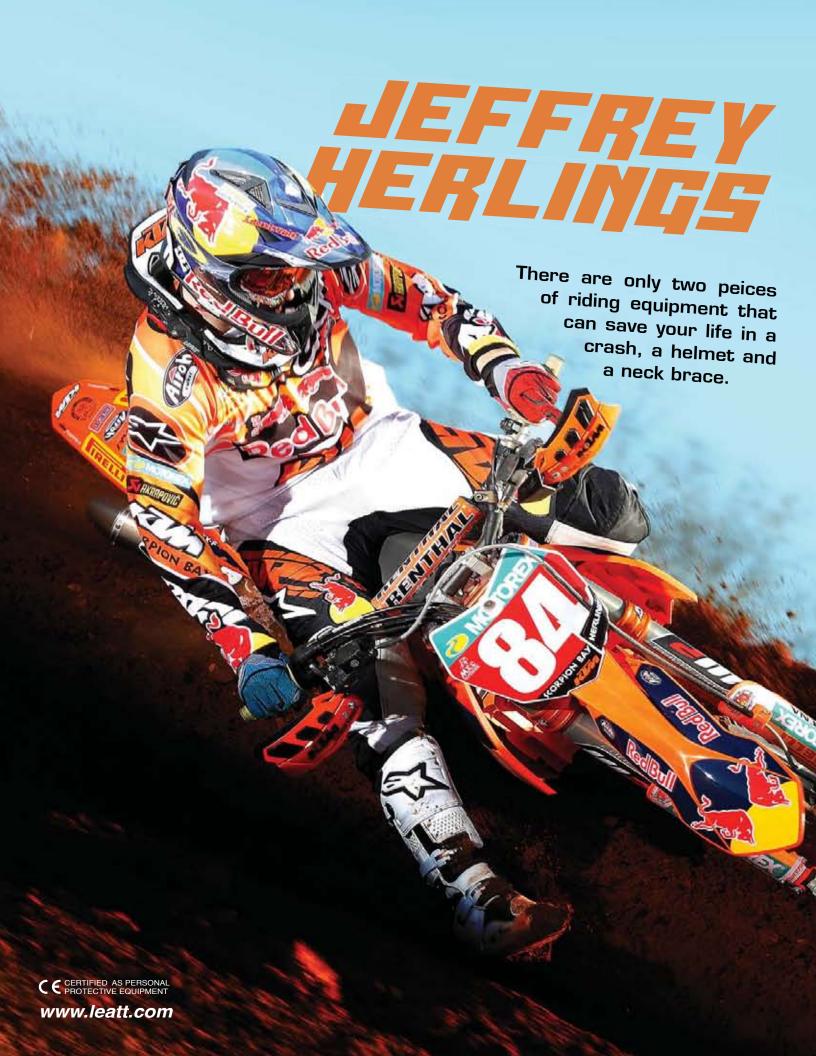


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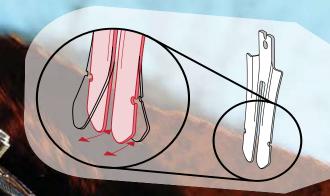












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# JAKE NICHOLLS AYEARTOFORGET

STORY GEOFF MEYER IMAGES RAY ARCHER

British rider Jake Nicholls has until now had a season he would like to forget. Despite getting his first ever podium finish and his first ever second place finish in a moto the KTM rider has struggled with crashes and mechanical issues.

Motocross Illustrated: Jake, obviously the season hasn't gone to plan for you. What has been the problem?
Nicholls: No it's not been what I hope for, I have really had mixed results, and two mechanical failures. In Portugal we had a problem in the second moto while I was holding fourth place, so I couldn't ride at 100% and rode around at 70% and only scored a few points. The Championships is out of question now, so I just want to get a good race and try and build

Motocross Illustrated: I remember talking to you in the pre-season and you thinking about even winning the Championship, so to be out of contention is a nightmare. Did you put too much pressure on yourself maybe?

on that.

Nicholls: I think I did put too much pressure on myself and I really wanted to be number two, but that was realistic to think that, but when I got on the bike I was trying really hard and I messed it up a few times, a big crash in Thailand, but I had a lot of shit going on, like my brake failing before a big jump and I can't even remember everything that has gone wrong.

Motocross Illustrated: I have to admit the MX2 class has been impressive, a lot of younger guys coming and doing well.

Nicholls: I knew it would be tough, when other guys leave the class, other guys come in and those new guys got a chance and they have run with it. I was a little surprised by the by my team mate (Romain Febvre) early in the season, and I have also been surprised by the consistency of Tixier, otherwise I thought they would all be there. I thought Charlier would actually be better than he has been.

Motocross Illustrated: Yes, as quickly as the opening round of the series you struggled. And you were suddenly the second guy in your team with Febvre doing so well in Qatar.

Nicholls: It has been a disaster really, part my fault and part because of the mechanical problems. I mean I was happy in Portugal I got second in the first race, that is the first time I have taken a second in a moto, plus I had my first podium earlier in the season, so we have had some good moments, but too many bad ones.

Motocross Illustrated: Of course in Portugal you got your first ever runner-up spot in a moto. That first moto was pretty intense with really good battles. Did you feel you had Dean (Ferris) when you caught him?







Nicholls: In Portugal I felt he was feeling the pressure, but he didn't make that many mistakes really. We were pushing hard before he crashed its normal when you put pressure on somebody and he made a mistake. I rode good in that race, came from 6th or 7th place in the first corner, so I was happy with that really.

Motocross Illustrated: You did a round of the Maxxis British Championship and won. Will you do more rounds in England?

Nicholls: I don't think so, I just miss home; obviously living in Belgium still and I had planned to go home anyway. I was coming off Valkenswaard and I did well there, plus it was my local track. I really just wanted to ride at the track, and get some racing at home and pick up some cash. I needed it as well, just to go home. I mean I missed a round of the Dutch Championship a weekend to also go back home, there is no place like home. We are not that thrilled about where we live really, it's ok, and it's done me the world of

good, but as life goes it's not bad, but it's much better at home.

**Motocross Illustrated**: Why would you not race more rounds of the Maxxis?

Nicholls: I don't like many of the tracks they go to, I would like to go to Hawktone Park, and if I go back I want to race a 450, because obviously next year I have to race the MX1 class. I planned to also do a Belgian Championship on the 450, so see how Brazil goes really. I mean around the half way point of the season I need to start riding it more and building up for 2014.

Motocross Illustrated: Making the change to the 450 class seems pretty tough. What makes you want to ride the 450 this year, because you planned to anyway or because of the results of guys like Roelants and Van Horebeek?

Nicholls: Partly I see how they are doing, but I would like to do it anyway, because I have never ridden one. I don't need to get stronger but I do need to ride one more often to be prepared for next year. At the minute I think they are doing well, I mean those old MX2 riders are doing okay and in Portugal Tommy really came forward at the end, I think they are doing well, but people underestimate changing classes, its tough enough changing the type of bike, let alone a bigger machine. Unfortunately people look at Paulin, who won his first race, but that is special. Roelants has obviously been struggling with injury, but I think they will do ok in the second half of the season. Still it's a big learning curve.



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# HANG TOUGH TYLARATTRAY

STORY BY ERIC JOHNSON IMAGES BY SIMON CUDBY

At precisely High Noon on Saturday, May 19, 2013, an American Motorcyclist Association official pulled the lever of an air horn, it's compressed air passing through a diaphragm and sending a loud shrill into the air, the piercing sound's wavelengths getting everyone's attention in the Prairie City OHV Park pit area. It was time to go racing.

Then 40 mechanics immediately reached for their motorcycles and pulled them off their respective stands. One of these mechanics was Wayne Lumgair, longtime spanner man for Monster Energy/ Pro Circuit/Kawasaki racer Tyla Rattray. Rattray himself, meanwhile, dressed in his racing gear, was sitting in a chair, looking off into nowhere with a 1000-yeard stare. Soon, recently christened Energy Supercross Monster Champion Ryan Villipoto, with his mechanic Mike Williamson on the back of the bike, came riding by Mitch Payton's new Monster Energy/Pro Circuit 18-wheeler which housed the Enzo Ferrari of Motcross' new 450 team. "TYLA!" screamed Villipoto to his friend Rattray who, now snapped out of the "zone" he was in, looked up and smirked. The South African then got to his feet, grabbed his helmet and an umbrella to beat back the impossibly bright California sunlight and began walking down towards the starting gate which, for when it would clank into the soft California dirt, would launch the 45th Annual Hangtown Motocross Classic - the longest running

National in U.S. motocross history. Along with the other 39 riders and mechanics behind the gate, Rattray and Lumgair lined up the works Kawasaki KX450F. Graced with engine parts and bits sourced from Formula 1 and NASCAR teams, the bike is a mechanical marvel - an alchemy of technology, ingenuity and increscent research and development. The colors of all the bikes, helmets and racing clothes were absolutely brilliant and an almost stifling atmosphere of nerves and tension reverberated through the staging area. Concurrently, well over 25,000 fans surrounded the sinuous track. There were people everywhere - people hanging off fences, people in lawn chairs, people all over the hillsides and people teeming all over the facility. Thousands of umbrellas were sprinkled amongst the throng, all of them absolutely glowing from the stinging sunlight. It was motocross nirvana. It was classic motocross. It's the reason why we all fell in the love with the sport in the first place. Back to Tyla Rattray. It's taken the 2008 FIM World Motocross Champion five years to get to this point, a point to where he is now on one of the elite teams in the paddock and racing against the world's best riders in the

premiere 450 class. The past two years have been extremely unkind to Rattray. Second in both the 2010 and 2011 MX250 classification in the AMA National Championship, for the 2013 season, Tyla was to be moved up to the 450 class by team boss Mitch Payton. However, starting with the Monster Energy Supercross Series, it all went sideways for the red head. A horrific crash at the Oakland Supercross left his with a nasty concussion and a fractured C7 vertebrae. He would be forced to the sidelines indefinitely. After healing up, Rattray was tapped by the Monster Energy/Kawasaki factory team to ride Ryan Villopoto's bike. Suffering from an injury, Villopoto's bike needed a rider and Rattray was given a huge opportunity. However, that all went to hell when a flying rock badly broke his hand at the season-opening Hangtown National. Rattray would make it back for the last four nationals. the highlight being a moto win in the deep chocolate-brown sand of Southwick, Massachusetts. The win was certainly a portent for good things to come for Rattray in 2013. During the winter of 2013, and with the help of Monster Energy,

Kawasaki and a number of other sponsors, Mitch Payton fulfilled a dream: He was given the green light to own and operate his own 450 race team. Dean Wilson was hired on and, at Payton's instance, so was Rattray.

"We wanted to give Tyla a chance because last year, when he was supposed to race Lites for us, he got hurt and sort of had a bad year," explained Payton earlier that morning at the '13 Hangtown National. "I wanted to give him a chance on a 450 for a season. So when we decided to do a 450 program I knew he could be a strong. I believe in him. Outdoors is usually where Tyla shines and I think he can be a player this season."

World renowned for his gritty, aggressive and hard driving racecraft, Payton went on to add that he felt these very attributes would be beneficial to Rattray on the much more powerful 450F. "He's a big boy and his fitness has never been an issue and he's always been good at the end of the motos," Payton added. "That'll be a big help with the 450s because the track gets so rough and the bikes are heavy and stuff and you usually see a lot of guys fade at the end of a moto. What I'm hoping all that pans out and that his stature and everything will help him do well in that class."

While, due to injuries and such, Rattray has been "off the radar" (in the words of one French journalist present

at Hangtown), Payton has full faith in Rattray and is keenly cognizant of the fact that his "guy" can be a winner

"Yeah, for sure. I believe he can win," exclaimed Payton. Everything would have to be right, but why not? He hasn't had the luck - last year for sure - but when you look at the two years previous - when he rode the little bikes - he was always right there for the championship so I would assume he'll be in the championship hunt this year."

Another person who has extreme confidence in Rattray is Aldon Baker. The trainer to the stars who helped create the monster that was Ricky Carmichael, Baker has been working on a daily basis with his charge Ryan Villipoto. That withstanding, Baker also trains and monitors Rattray, who quite often rides and trains with Ryan.

"During the week and at practice I see him very comparable to Ryan [Villopoto]," said Baker a few hours before the opening 450 moto. "Now he needs to bring that to the race. Yeah, the fitness and strength? Yeah, it's not a problem with Tyla. The only thing with Tyla is that he get on it at the beginning of the moto. I think the class is deep and it's that initial "out

heel". And he knows that. So a stage, he is going to have to g off the back earlier and use his ness and everything else to get to the front. For sur capabilities-wise, yeah, I see whe does during the week and whe is capable of honestly getting that box. For sure. Even Ryan said that. Ryan has said, 'If he like he rides during the week. I be on the box.' Potentially, he is sort of guy who can win."

the opening 30-minutes-plus-tylap moto of the 2013 Lucas Oi Motocross Championship, 40 I are kicked to life, rolled up to tyley edge of the gate, the rider stomp down on the shift lever and drop the transmission into gear, the revs





of the gate" that is



first left hand turn then make an immediate right and race up the hill. James Stewart, Ryan Villipoto and Ryan Dungey - the usual suspects - took off, never to be heard from again, while Rattray bashing, banging and throwing elbows for his rightful spot on the track was WAY back in 15t. And while he would get back to a very hard fought ninth (his lap times getting lower and lower as the moto wore down), it wasn't what he wanted. "Shitty star," answered Mitch Payton when I asked him about Rattray's moto. "He rode well and kept getting faster and faster at the end, but at this level, you have to be up there at the start. He'll be fine." Back in the cool confines of the pits and soaking himself down with ice and water, Rattray pondered about what had just gone down. "I struggle here at this track," he reasoned. "I always have. It's so much different than all the other tracks. I just never felt comfortable. I mean I think they forks were a little too soft on the forks on the front. We'll get that fixed and get the nose up for next weekend and we'll also try something with the shock." Little did anybody know, for no one said a word, but Rattray's 450 engine had gone south on him during the moto. "Tyla blew a head gasket and the engine lost all the water and he lost a lot of horsepower," said Wayne Lumgair while he and two other Pro Circuit mechanics thrashed to insert and brand new engine into the bike's frame. "We changed the engine just to be safe." Rattray would gate ninth in the second and final moto, but still, it wasn't enough as Stewart, Dungey, Villipoto, as well as Honda youngsters Trey Canard and Just Barcia held down the top five. Rattray was forced to deal with the likes of Ryan Sipes, Andrew Short, Mike Alessi, Dean Wilson and others for track position. When all was said and done, Rattray crossed the finish line in ninth. An hour later, back inside the Mon-

ster Energy/Pro Circuit/Kawasaki hauler, Rattray sat on a mechanic's bench and recollected on his day at the races. While he knew his 9-9 moto scores were nothing to put a match to gasoline to, he was both pragmatic and optimistic about the 11-round Trans-American National Championship road ahead. "It'll definitely get better, you know? We're also going to try a couple things engine-wise this week. My race bike is very fast. A stock 450 sportsman Kawasaki is very powerful. I think we have to kind of de-tune the engine a little bit. We need to make it somewhere it is still rideable and I can push it. I think we have guite a bit of power now - which is a good thing to have. It's better to have too much power than too little power. This track is different. The bumps are weird. Last year we had a lot of ruts and this year we had no ruts. I'm happy, though. It's good to get the first one out of the way. We'll go to Col-

orado next week and see what we can do there. Everything is good. My fitness is good and all that. I just have to work on a few little things and I'll be up there." Mitch Payton – certainly no stranger to this game of motocross – was pleased with Rattray's day. "Look, his moto scores weren't awesome, but I thought he rode hard and he rode well. He's healthy and his speed is there. I have full faith in him. He'll keep getting stronger and stronger as the season goes on. Just watch."



















## HONDA 150 EUROPEAN C

The FIM Motocross World Championship is in the process of reorganising and reshaping how it will be presented and perceived for years to come. While there is a degree of uncertainty at the highest level there are structures and efforts lower down the chain that give go od cause for shiny optimism.

#### STORY BY ADAM WHEELER

The European Motorcycling Union has clearly established a ladder for youth progression with 65/85cc regional series' feeding into a 125cc two-stroke division and then a strong EMX250 channel straight into Grand Prix. Next month another path will be swept for 11-14 year olds with a brave throttle hand and burgeoning motorcycle technique as the first of five rounds in the Honda 150 European Championship gets underway at Ernee and the Grand Prix of France on June 9. The fact that the series even exists in motocross circles is unusual. Participants and fans of the sport are normally selfreliant as parents dutifully drive their children around the country competition. Now this one-make contest – that will also appear at Belgium and the UK – is making it as easy, cheap and glamorous as possible for kids to get out and race. The big question is whether it is with the right

Honda launched their CRF150R back in 2006 to fill a hole in their declining and eventually doomed two-stroke programme and also to offer a means for novice off-roaders to acclimatise early to the four-stroke age. While riding laws have proved difficult in some countries (France have a limitation of age when it

comes to engine capacity) changing attitudes has also presented a battle in schooling parents and kids that a 150 four-stroke is an equally viable riding tool. "The bike's equivalent is an 85cc two-stroke and youngsters have the option to take either when it comes to the two-stroke or the Motor Europe's Off-road Racing Manager Roger Harvey, one of stroke is popular of course but the CRF150R gives kids an insight into what they are likely to be riding later in life. It is only four kilos heavier than an 85cc two-stroke and young ones that have ridden both have made comments about enjoying the torque of the four-stroke. It is a sturdy thing; we have people riding around with more than 300 hours on the bike, so it is reliable. It has been manufactured and built in a robust way taking into account the parent and child that will learn about it and maintain it. An example of a small detail is the use of steel rather than aluminium for the gear lever.' Electing to indulge in the European Championship and buy a CRF150R carries obvious benefits. It is cost effective to compete in five rounds at Grand Prix with the transport, servicing and maintenance carried out by a three man crew and a full semi articulated truck for €7950. At the end of the schedule the riders "This has never been done before in motocross and I think people will



## HAMPIONSHIP



need to come and grasp how the series is run," opines Harvey. "Kids literally need to roll up with their kitbags as everything else is taken care of. In some ways it is a process of breaking away from the usual way of coming to races with a camper and van or a trailer but it's a different concept. I think it is cracking value." Depending on the initial subscription volume it is an economical equation that could potentially see Honda 'in the red' for investing in and supporting the youth scene and their product. The championship is not the only push for the CRF by the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles either; the Xtreme Academy that transported factory Honda riders like Evgeny Bobryshev, Rui Goncalves and Jonathan Barragan the length of Europe ran into six figures and was a well-meaning scheme and the first step towards formation of the European Championship. Harvey: "We have a sister series in road racing, the European Junior Cup, and the first year was a process of setting it up and establishing a slightly different way for people to go racing. The entries through but they increased and for the third it is oversubscribed. We have motocross so we hope it will have a beneficial effect for the youngster looking to progress."

"In the UK I can see how popular the two-strokes are and some brands allow a clear route through those machines up to 125s, although there doesn't

































For further information please visit www.honda150championship.com













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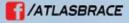






## LOHOOSEATUS Ryan Villopoto















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